



Environmental Factors: Being Prepared and Ready for Change

The 10 Components of Successful EBP Implementation:

1. Leadership
2. Environmental Factors
3. Staff
4. Training and Technical Assistance
5. Communication
6. Change Agent
7. Integration
8. Resources
9. Time
10. Fidelity

Environmental Factors make up the background against which someone or something is seen.

Environmental factors are the social and cultural forces that make up the atmosphere which shape not only the lives of people, but an entire population by contributing to a result or process. In short, they are the external and internal forces that affect the work we do on a daily basis.

This year Nebraska State Probation is celebrating 50 years of service. Throughout that time this system has grown and changed in order to better serve the community. In the past three years, the Nebraska Probation System has not only continued to change, it has transformed.

- **Adaptable to Challenges:**

Nebraska Probation has flourished in an environment fraught with significant challenges and fears in relation to the implementation of EBP. These fears ranged from internal concerns relating to the uncertainty of an individual officer's ability to live up to the expectations of a new administrator **and** a new way of doing the work, to the systemic fears associated with an organization's attempt to change. In Nebraska, an added stressor was the political climate which for many years had provoked controversy associated with where Probation should be organizationally aligned.

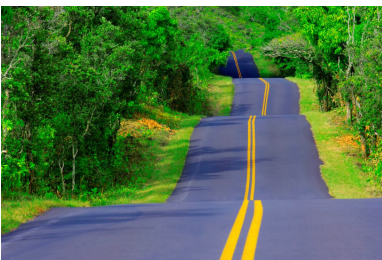
In 2005, with the appointment of a new Probation Administrator Nebraska Probation took advantage of a moment in time to begin the EBP implementation process as there was public and legislative interest in reducing prison overcrowding.

An initial challenge was to assure probation officers and staff had the skills necessary to move the system forward. Thanks to funds from offender fees, intensive training and new programs were implemented to address the needs of DUI probationers, high-risk substance abusers, sex offenders, domestic violence probationers, and juveniles. Officers now knew what was expected of them, and felt that they were ready for the challenge; however, continuing to work the old job while learning how to do the new job proved to be a mighty challenge and could be compared to trying to live in a house while it was being built around you!

It was important to support the staff during this time. Regular communication in person, via email, by letter or through the supervisors was vital. Allowing officers and staff to feed back concerns and comments helped to prepare everyone for the work ahead, and helped calm many of the fears experienced across the state.



*Great organizations
emerge from adversity
even stronger!*



- **Intervention Must Meet Agency's Need (How it Began)**

In November of 2005, the new administrator convened the management of Nebraska Probation to develop a new Vision and Mission for the system. Management supported implementing a new approach to implementing the vision and mission and chose the *Integrated Model of Evidence-Based Practices* as the appropriate method to address probationer needs.

The first piece of the Integrated Model to be implemented was the 8 Principles for Effective Intervention. Training was created and implemented on the model and the components of EBP. Officers across the state were trained in a research-based assessment tool, motivational interviewing, cognitive programming, as well as specialized techniques for effective supervision, such as the use of positive reinforcement and supervision based on level of risk.

The second component of the model is collaboration. From the start, Nebraska Probation collaborated on programming, training and grant-funded activities with Nebraska's Department of Corrections and Health and Human Services. This collaboration expanded to working with private treatment providers on the Standardized Model and the Fee for Service Voucher Program, judges through the EBP committee appointed by the Supreme Court, and collaboration within the individual probation districts. (More on all of these initiatives later.)

The final piece of meeting Probation's need to implement EBP was promoting organizational development. At the direction of the Probation Administrator, EBP teams and committees were initiated to assist with creating organizational buy-in and quality assurance. These teams worked to create an individualized plan for implementation of EBP in their area, as well as worked to provide informal training and encouragement to overcome anxieties and fears about the new approach to probationer supervision. Each team brought their ideas to Administration for approval and revision, in order to achieve effective implementation and an overall unified voice.

- **Ready for Change**

Probation wanted to establish itself as a valuable commodity to Nebraska's communities by showing that delivering effective services improved community safety and helped create productive citizens. *The Community Safety Impact Model* was created as a guide to lawmakers and citizens and a roadmap for the implementation of EBP for probation officers. The model detailed the assessment, supervision, and evaluation process for the new Probation System.

Change is not easy. Creating readiness for change is a daunting task for an organization. Change does not happen in a vacuum. Nebraska's transformation was assisted through the Legislature's adoption of the Community Corrections Act, funding support through grants and offender fees, and overall support from the community. Many district Probation offices were able to expand their services through additional financial and resource support from county boards and local agencies. Due to the system's willingness to work through the change and the support from the community, the Nebraska Probation System was able to implement EBP in three years, versus the average of five to six years.

Transformation never happens in one swoop and is always affected by the environment. Environmental factors are dynamic and constantly changing, which is why the probation system adapts and changes with the needs of our communities.